



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senator Dean Skelos gives the GOP response to Governor David Paterson's State of the State Address

DEAN G. SKELOS January 7, 2010



Senator Dean Skelos: State of the State response 1/6/09

In his State of the State message Governor Paterson said that New York faces an enormous fiscal crisis.

He's right.

New York, like other states, has been hit hard by the economic recession, forcing you and other families to make sacrifices in order to make ends meet.

Albany must now do the same.

Governor Paterson talked a lot about fiscal restraint, but we've heard that speech before.

Last year, he gave a similar speech and promised to hold the line on spending and not raise taxes.

Unfortunately, that did not happen.

Along with his Democrat colleagues in the Senate and Assembly, the Governor approved a budget that included record increases in spending and a record \$11 billion dollars in new taxes.

Those increases took a \$2400 dollar bite out of the average family budget at a time when many families are struggling.

Every single Democrat in the Senate voted to increase spending and taxes and every Senate Republican stood up for taxpayers and voted against it.

The budget they adopted made life much tougher for every family in New York.

You lost your STAR rebate checks that helped you pay your property taxes.

Your energy taxes were raised, increasing your utility bills.

They increased the cost of health insurance for your family.

And, they made it more expensive for you to register your car, renew your driver's license and pay for every day family needs.

The sad thing is, none of that had to happen.

One year ago, Washington gave New York more than \$25 billion dollars in federal stimulus money.

These funds were a unique, one-time, opportunity for New York to get its fiscal house in order, protect taxpayers and weather the national economic storm.

Unfortunately, it was an opportunity that was squandered.

Instead of using stimulus funds to balance the budget, reduce taxes or create jobs – the Democrats in the Senate and Assembly spent every dime --- then they raised your taxes and spent even more.

Now, Governor Paterson says things will be different.

He again said he will not raise spending or taxes.

We certainly hope this time he really means it.

New Yorkers just can't afford a tax and spend approach anymore.

We must change the way state government works.

We need a new agenda that will help struggling middle income families and return New York State to prosperity.

Here is what we must do:

First, we must cap state spending to prevent the Governor and future Governors and Legislatures from spending more than we can afford.

Then, we must cut out-of-control state spending.

Like you, I cannot stand to watch state government continue to waste your money.

Take Medicaid for instance, which consumes the largest part of the budget.

Studies have concluded that as much of 10 percent of the Medicaid budget is wasted through fraud and abuse – that's \$4 billion dollars.

Yet the Democrats eliminated measures to stop Medicaid fraud.

Senate Republicans will propose even stronger laws to fight fraud and abuse in our Medicaid system and recover billions of dollars in taxpayer money that's being wasted.

As we did last year, Senate Republicans will also oppose all tax increases.

In fact, we will call for a two-thirds, supermajority vote in each house to make it even tougher to increase taxes.

We will oppose any effort to pass costs onto schools and local governments that will force them to raise property taxes.

We will also fight to restore the STAR property tax rebate check program to provide homeowners with real property tax relief.

Overburdened middle-income families simply cannot afford to pay higher property tax bills each year.

New Yorkers want financial security – they want a secure job with a good salary.

Therefore, we must create quality, high-paying jobs that New Yorkers deserve.

The assistance New York received from Washington was supposed to help create jobs – but the Democrats' budget did not include any economic development plan and didn't create a single job.

Senate Republicans will advance a plan to keep current jobs from leaving New York and create new job opportunities so your children can stay here to work and raise their families.

Lastly, we will seek to give you the power, through initiative and referendum, to make new laws when elected officials fail to heed the call for change.

We can only achieve these goals if we work together in a bipartisan fashion.

We have seen what happens when one party controls every lever of state government.

Democrat leaders went behind closed doors last year and refused to listen to our ideas.

The result was more wasteful spending, higher taxes, and no accountability.

Whether you live downstate on Long Island or Upstate in Fulton, DeWitt or Cheektowaga, you are paying the price.

That has to change and we will do our part to see that it does.

The Governor and Democrats in the Senate and Assembly cannot continue to dig deeper into your family pocketbook to balance Albany's budget.

Senate Republicans will do everything we can to protect

you -- the taxpayer -- and make sure that in 2010 New York moves forward to a better, brighter future.

Thank you.